



Remarks

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-23 were rejected under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,479,992 to Häseker et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,541,885 to Caudill, Jr. et al., and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 4,791,019 to Ohta et al. Applicants believe that this rejection is improper for the following reasons.

First, there is no suggestion or motivation to combine Häseker et al. '992 and Caudill, Jr. et al. '885. Häseker et al. '992 relates to vehicle roof liners. In contrast, Caudill, Jr. et al. '885 deals with a decorative seat cover assembly (see column 1, lines 7-8). As such, Caudill, Jr. et al. '885 is not in the same field of art as Häseker et al. '992.

Furthermore, Caudill, Jr. et al. '885 does not address the particular problem with which the Applicants are concerned. The present application solves the problem of providing an interior roof lining component with both improved geometric adaptability and increased acoustic absorption (see page 2, line 4-7). In contrast, Caudill, Jr. et al. '885 addresses the problem of adding decorative embossing to a relatively thick urethane foam layer using dielectric embossing technology (see column 2, lines 5-9). As such, it is respectfully believed that a person of ordinary skill in the vehicle roof liner art would not look to the vehicle seating art, and more particularly to Caudill, Jr. et al. '885, to solve the problem addressed by the present application. Therefore, the Examiner's proposed combination of references is believed to be improper.

For clarification, claim 1 has been amended to more distinctly claim the present invention. More specifically, claim 1 has been amended to recite an interior lining component for a vehicle roof. Also, all reference numbers have been deleted from the claims.

Even if the cited references were properly combinable, many claimed features are not disclosed by the prior art. For instance, none of the cited references provide any teaching regarding upper and lower foam layer porosities as required by claim 13, flexural

strength as required by claim 19, or material thicknesses ratios as required by claims 5 and 20. As another example, Claims 8, 16, and 23 require a reinforcing mat disposed above the support layer. Neither Häseker et al. '992 nor Caudill, Jr. et al. '885 discloses this feature. Ohta et al. '019 does not cure the deficiencies of Häseker et al. '992 or Caudill, Jr. et al. '885. Instead, Ohta et al. '019 discloses a "polyurethane foam reinforced with long glass fibers" (see column 2, lines 42-44). Ohta et al. '019 does not disclose a separate reinforcing mat as required by claims 8, 16, and 23.

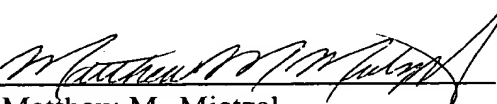
Conclusion

Applicants have made a genuine effort to fully respond to the rejection and advance the prosecution of this case. Applicants believe that all formal and substantive requirements for patentability have been met and that this case is in condition for allowance. Notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If any additional issues need to be resolved, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at her earliest convenience.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of the following fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-3978. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment



VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

1. (Twice amended) An interior lining component [(1)] for a vehicle roof comprising at least one decorative layer [(3)] forming a facing [(4)] of the interior lining component [(1)], an intermediate layer [(5)] covered by said decorative layer [(3)], and at least one support layer [(6)], characterized in that the support layer [(6)] comprises at least one lower [(7)] and one upper [(8)] foam panel which are interconnected by pressing.
2. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that the lower [(7)] and the upper [(8)] foam panel are interconnected along their whole area of contact.
3. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 2, characterized in that the foam panels [(7, 8)] have different material thicknesses [(9, 10)].
4. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that in comparison with the upper foam panel [(8)], the lower foam panel [(7)] bordering on the intermediate layer [(5)] has a material thickness [(9)] which is not greater than the material thickness [(10)] of said upper foam panel [(8)].
5. (Twice amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that the ratio of the material thicknesses [(9, 10)] of the lower and upper foam panels [(7, 8)] is 0.01 to 0.95.
6. (Twice amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that the upper foam panel [(8)] has a smaller lateral dimension than the lower foam panel [(7)].

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8. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that a reinforcing mat [(11)] is arranged on the back [(12)] of the upper foam panel [(8)] facing away from the lower foam panel [(7)].

9. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 8, characterized in that the side of the reinforcing mat [(11)] facing away from the foam panels [(7, 8)] has a cover fleece [(20)] arranged thereon.

10. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that the intermediate layer [(5)] is formed of a cushioning layer [(22)] and of a connection layer [(21)] arranged on a cushioning-layer back [(14)] which faces the lower foam panel [(7)].

11. (Twice amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that the foam panels [(7, 8)] are formed of polyurethane.

12. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that the upper and lower foam panels [(7, 8)] consist of the same materials.

13. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, characterized in that the upper and lower foam panels [Panels (7, 8)] have different porosities.

14. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 10, characterized in that the cushioning layer [(22)] is a flexible soft foam layer [(16)].

15. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 9, characterized in that the cover fleece [(20)] is a PET fleece or a PE/PET composite.

16. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 8, characterized in that the reinforcing mat[s (11)] contains glass.

17. (Twice amended) An interior lining component according to claim 8, characterized in that connection layers [(15)] are arranged between the upper and lower foam panels [(7, 8)] and between the foam panels [(7, 8)] and the reinforcing mat [(11)].

19. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, wherein the support layer [(6)] has a flexural strength greater than the decorative layer [(3)] and the intermediate layer [(5)].

20. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, wherein the ratio of material thicknesses [(9, 10)] of the lower and upper foam panels [(7, 8)] is in the range of 0.3 to 0.75.

21. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, wherein the connection layers [(15)] comprise polyurethane adhesive.

22. (Amended) An interior lining component according to claim 1, wherein the interior lining component defines an inside roof lining [(2)].

23. (Amended) An inside roof lining for a vehicle, the roof lining comprising:

at least one decorative layer [(3)] forming a facing [(4)] of the roof lining [(1)];

an intermediate layer [(5)] covered by the decorative layer [(3)], the intermediate layer including a cushioning layer;

a first reinforcing mat disposed above the intermediate layer, the reinforcing layer comprising fibers;

a support layer [(6)] disposed above the first reinforcing layer, the support layer [(6)] including a lower foam panel [(7)], an upper foam panel [(8)] and an adhesive layer [(15)] disposed between the foam panels [(7, 8)] for interconnecting the foam panels [(7, 8)] together, each foam layer [(7, 8)] comprising polyurethane; and

a second reinforcing mat disposed above the support layer, the second reinforcing mat comprising fibers.